Impact Report

2025/26



Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants

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Note: *All quotes marked with an asterisk (*) have been anonymised to protect the identity of the individuals involved.*



Message from our Advisory Panel Chair

Islington Centre is important because it creates a welcoming space for people in the community who need support. There is a sense of warmth and genuine care. People at Islington Centre show respect and empathy, and that makes a difference immediately when someone walks in. Everyone has a different story, but there is a shared understanding that no one should have to face challenges alone.

I wanted to get involved because the Centre's mission is very close to my heart. As someone who already works closely with the organisation and is an integral part of the community, I have seen firsthand what works well, as well as any potential gaps or areas for improvement. I wanted to bring this perspective to the Advisory Panel.

My hope is also that the Panel will create practical recommendations that can be implemented, not just discuss ideas. Whether it's improving programmes, expanding partnerships, or developing better outreach, I deeply want the Advisory Panel to deliver measurable progress.

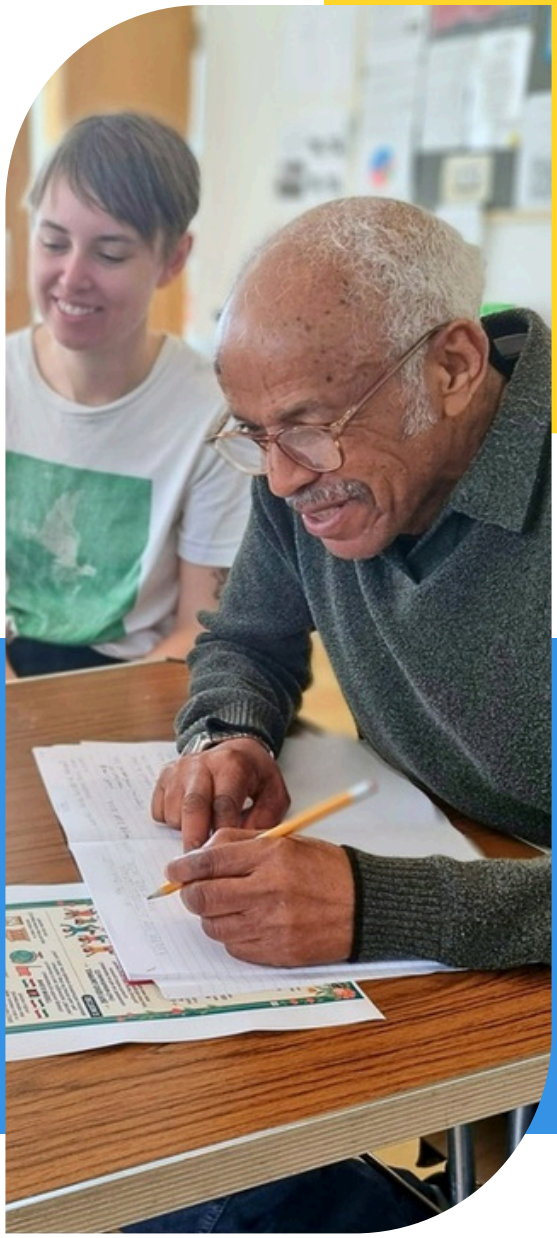


Finally, I hope it will strengthen collaboration and trust, so everyone feels heard and feels part of a shared plan for the Centre.

Israel, Advisory Panel Chair

Find out more about our new Community Advisory Panel and why it is so important to us on page 4.

About Us



Mission

To offer people the emotional support, practical tools and sense of community they need to build a happy life in the UK.

Vision

We envisage a world where refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are integrated fully into their new communities with equal access to opportunities to progress their lives and fulfil their potential.

Values

01 Offering a warm welcome to all who come to us

02 Working together to put the community first

03 Care and compassion

04 Respect and dignity for all

05 Improving our working model from our own learning

06 Showing grit and determination to be here for our community

07 Working together with our community to develop in line with the need

What We Do



Classes and Activities

Our comprehensive offering of classes and therapeutic activities includes English, art, poetry, yoga, gym, exercise, dance, choir, health & wellness, and digital skills. Classes are aimed at increasing language proficiency, improving wellbeing, and building a sense of community. Last year we offered **1,180 classes** both online and in-person.



Support Service

The Support Service provides expert advice and one-to-one casework to overcome barriers people often face. Last year we offered **1,175 appointments** supporting 78 people to have safe accommodation, 75 people to get the legal support they needed to advance their asylum case, 22 people to apply for college and so much more.



Centre Days

Every week, our Centre Days operate as a community hub with a space for migrants to come together, join engaging sessions, access advice, meet friends, select items from the 'free shop', enjoy a shared meal, and feel at home in a welcoming space at our three sites in Islington. Last year we offered **115 Centre Days** with over 2,700 total attendances.



Support Packages

Through our Support Package financial hardship grants scheme, asylum seekers avoid hunger, have the means to buy essentials and can live with dignity. We are proud that last year we made **2,719 disbursements to 145 people seeking asylum**.



Digital Inclusion

Online access is vital to securing resources, attending online classes, and pursuing education. Last year we distributed **104 smartphones and laptops** and empowered our community to feel confident online through 1-1 digital support sessions and a weekly digital skills class.



Community Advisory Panel

Led By and For Refugees and People Seeking Asylum

Since 1997, the Centre has been shaped by our community. We recognise the wealth of strength and abilities in our community and value our community's input in designing, developing and delivering our work.

Since September 2024, we've partnered with co-creation specialist Expert Link through a grant with the Lloyds Bank Foundation to embed co-creation across the Centre. We are proud that our community is involved at every level of our work, from volunteering at our front desk, to leading sessions and co-designing our annual surveys.

This year we launched a Community Advisory Panel. The Panel will work directly with our Board on service design, further elevating lived experience in our decision-making. Over the year ahead, we are excited to see the Panel grow and begin to influence the direction of our work.

Our Panel Chair, Israel, speaks powerfully about how the migrant journey causes people to feel dehumanised and emphasises the need for spaces like the Advisory Panel where people can rebuild confidence and a sense of self.

"People don't feel like they are real human beings, they feel that they are under other people. Like they don't count. First of all, we need everyone to learn to use their voices and move from simple talking in a group, to talking with confidence about what they need."

Our Year in Numbers

635
English Classes

545
Arts, Fitness, + Health Classes

115
In-Person Centre Days

1,175
Support Service Appointments

2,719
Support Packages Disbursed

1,860
Home-cooked Meals Served

15
Educational + Cultural Trips

104
Laptops + Phones Distributed













"The Centre helped me by referring me to Freedom from Torture and finding a solicitor. I also got household supplies, travel money, and mobile top-up. I enjoy lots of activities like choir, dance, art and writing, meeting friends, lunches, and IT learning."

- Rita*





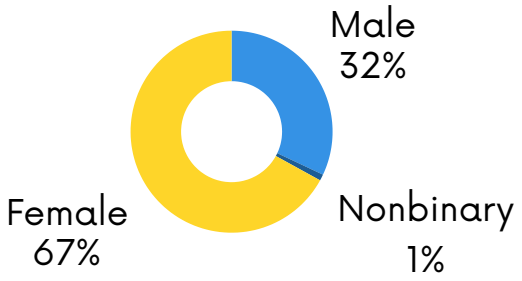


Our Community



Islington Centre is proud to be a hub of services and support to our community of 225 individuals representing over 40 countries. We have been in London for 29 years, building relationships of trust and mutual respect with those starting a new life in the UK.

Gender

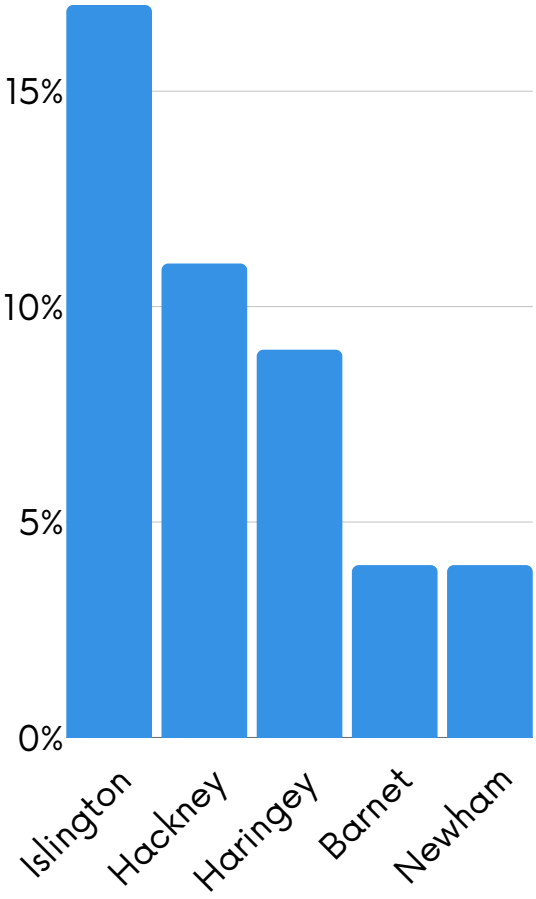


Destitution*

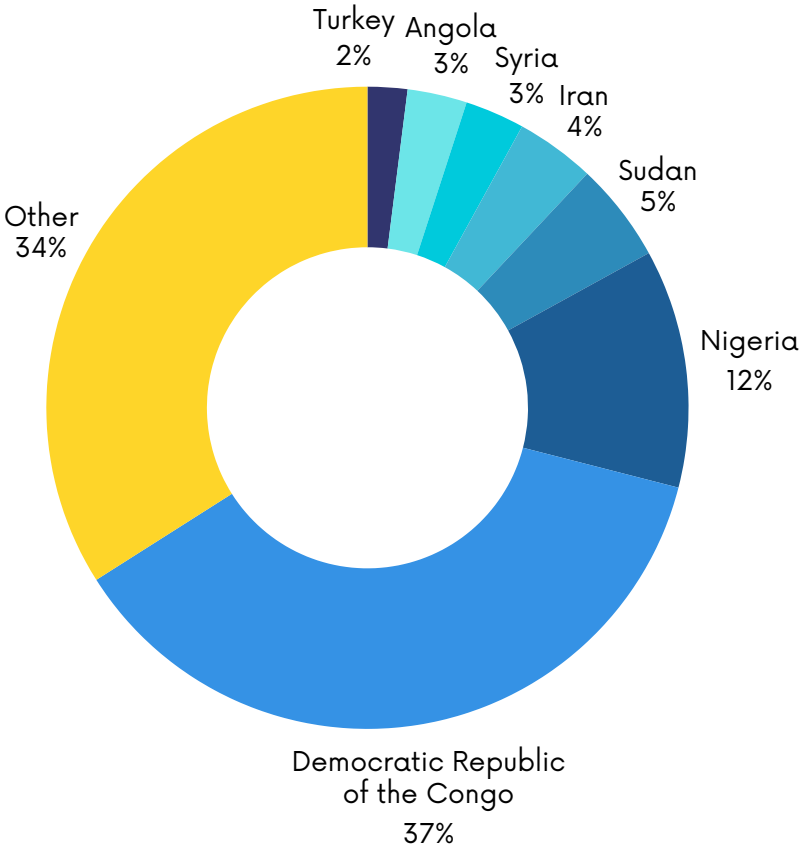


*People who are not legally allowed to work or access government support

Top 5 Boroughs



Country of Origin









"I like workshops that teach things like yoga and dance. It has made a big difference for me. I feel more emotionally supported."

- Celeste*







"Islington Centre helped me relieve a bit of stress. Sometimes, when you're stressed and in the class, you forget about things for a while. "

- Zain*

Outcomes

Across the year, our community of 225 people achieved many positive outcomes in their lives through their own hard work and the advocacy, referrals and casework of our Support Service. Our Support Service offers advice on a wide range of issues, including healthcare, education and housing and is registered with the Immigration Advice Authority (IAA - formerly OISC) to provide advice at Level 1 (Asylum and Protection) and plans to achieve Level 2 by the end of 2026. Last year, through 1,175 appointments, the issues people overcame included:

78 people avoided street-sleeping and had safe **housing**

75 people progressed their asylum/immigration case with **legal support**

50 people **negotiated the asylum system**

43 people saw a doctor or dentist to get **healthcare**

42 people accessed **welfare/benefits** to help relieve poverty

22 people applied to further their **education**

20 people accessed **food banks**

19 people accessed **therapy / counselling**

19 people resolved **debt**

15 people created CVs and sought **employment**

"They will respond to your case and **sort it out immediately.**"
- Beni

Outcomes

We are committed to ensuring that our services remain responsive, relevant, and impactful. We collect feedback from our community through regular co-creation and feedback sessions and through two annual co-created surveys, one to new starters in February and a second to the whole community in July. This ongoing dialogue helps us refine our approach and stay aligned with evolving needs. Below are the results from our all-community survey about the Centre's impact over the last 12 months:

Less Isolated + More Part of Community

88%

Less Stressed

98%

More Confident

100%

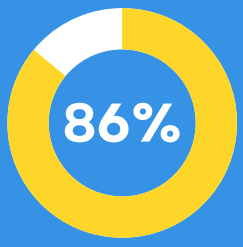
More Confident Using Computers + Internet

91%

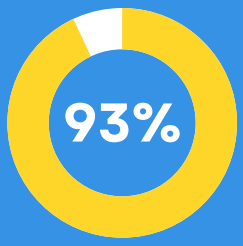
English Improved



Access to Food, Clothes, + Essentials Improved



Physical Wellbeing Improved





Community Quotes

"I like to learn English. I like to meet people when I am stressed. Outside is very hard. When I am here I am happy. I like to see people. I can talk to the people here. "

"Islington Centre is welcoming and friendly. It feels like a real community where people from different backgrounds support each other. The digital skills and English classes are practical and useful and helped me build my confidence."

"Islington Centre is a place where I find a lot of happiness and progress with my English level and meet people of my community. I'm making friends. I was struggling with my course because of a computer and they gave me a laptop. Islington Centre helped me to continue my studies online."

"Islington Centre is very helpful and supportive and caring. They helped me with accommodation, food bank vouchers, and learning new things."

"The Centre helped me with my legal support and getting help with everything for my children. If I get a letter I don't understand, I can bring it here to the Support Service and they will help me."

"The Islington Centre takes people who need it and treats them as family. They do what is needed for them, talk together, and offer support. I enjoy the activities and this year I got certificates from English class and library programme."

*Feedback provided anonymously by community members during our latest surveys.



Nadia's Story

Nadia [not her real name] attends English class at Islington Centre every week with her two-year-old toddler and her six-month-old baby. At the class, her children are beloved by all and doted on by volunteers and friends.

Nadia is highly motivated to improve her English so she can navigate daily life in the UK, speak with her GP, support her children as they will speak English in school, and eventually find work. She often shares how grateful she is for this class, particularly because she can bring her children with her. Childcare is one of the biggest barriers preventing her from studying elsewhere.

During the class, Nadia sits one-to-one with a volunteer conversation partner to work through the day's themes and activities while her children sit with her. Over the months, her confidence has grown and her English has steadily improved, giving her greater independence and hope for the future.

Nadia shared:

"I like to come here to learn English. It is very good for me. It helps me with going to my GP, going to hospital, and school for my son. I like to learn English for myself. It is very important for me to learn. It is very important to learn English in order to be able to work.

I come here because I can take my baby and my toddler with me. *When I am coming here I can nurse my baby. I don't have any childcare or someone to watch them for me to study. Here I can bring them with me so that I can learn. I have improved my English since coming. I am very happy to work with teacher Robina. She is helping me. The Islington Centre is also helping me to get vouchers for food, for clothes, and everything. Thank you."*

Volunteers

This year **95 volunteers** brought their time, skills, and warmth to Islington Centre. Volunteers are a core part of our community. They make the Centre the welcoming, hopeful place it is.

From supporting English learners to cooking hot lunches, joining art sessions, helping with casework, and our strong leadership on our Trustee Board, our volunteers give their time, energy, and compassion throughout the year. Their contribution is truly invaluable.



Nina

"**You can really feel that sense of support and community**. I always look forward to the English classes each week. They just feel like a group of people chatting, exchanging stories and languages, and getting to know one another. It's really special to be a part of that."

Mohammad

"**I enjoyed being able to support the community, meet people, and be part of something positive**. Everyone is so kind and genuinely willing to help others without hesitation. It really gives a sense of family and makes people feel welcome and supported."





Anna

"The sense of community is inspiring. Very positive energy. Lots of people coming together from all sorts of places, backgrounds, and experiences. **There is always a sense of warmth and hope and joy about the place**."

Danielle's Story

When Danielle [not her real name] first came to Islington Centre in 2019, she was struggling with poor mental health made worse by being separated from her children, and awaiting a decision on her asylum claim. She dreamed of working, being reunited with her children, and starting a new life in the UK.

Danielle joined our higher-level English class, our choir, and our art classes and began building confidence and a sense of community. When her asylum claim was denied, we supported her to apply for support and accommodation for refused asylum seekers and to submit a fresh claim. While Danielle waited for the outcome, she continued attending classes, met regularly with the Support Service, and received a laptop to study English at Mary Ward College, where she completed higher-level ESOL and IT courses.

In 2024, Danielle was granted leave to remain, and we stood alongside her as she transitioned to this new stage of life. She sought new housing, applying for refugee hosting, council housing, and then an emergency night shelter when nothing else was available. After an extended stay at the night shelter and many challenges, we helped arrange housing association accommodation, and Danielle moved into a safe, comfortable flat. She secured a grant to furnish her home with essential items.

Our caseworkers supported her to apply for jobs, and celebrated with her when she secured work as a cook in a school in her borough.

Life was so much better than it had been, but Danielle's three daughters were still in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We helped Danielle submit a refugee family reunion application and liaised with her solicitor throughout the year-long process.



In the summer of 2025, after eight years apart, her three daughters arrived in London. We helped Danielle apply to the council to move house, set up utilities and bills, referred her to children's services and supported the family to register with a GP and local schools. Danielle is now in a lovely flat, watching her daughters grow, and looking forward to a future in the UK.

Our Partners

Islington Centre is a hub of support, connecting our community with a wide variety of partner organisations through our in-person and online programmes including:

Organisation	Session
Advocates for International Development (A4ID)	Legal support
Arachne Women's Support	Advice service for women
Archway Upcycle	Art with upcycled materials
Bloody Good Period	Menstrual equity and women's health
British Museum	History and object handling
Bread and Roses	Floriculture therapy for refugee women
Music Action International: Crisis Choir	Choir for refugees and asylum seekers
Dame Emily Thornberry, MP for Islington South and Finsbury	Power of community & Islington amenities/offerings
Dr. Claire Barton, Oncologist	Cancer education & awareness
Dr. Fiona Cornish, GP	Personal health & navigating NHS
Islington Council Borough of Sanctuary	Network of refugee support in Islington
Islington Library South	Literacy programme
Islington Parent & Baby Psychology Service	NHS parent/baby wellbeing support
Lawyers Against Poverty	Know your rights and legal support
Mayor of Islington	Celebrating diversity of Islington
NHS Central London Action on Sexual Health (CLASH)	Sexual and reproductive health outreach
Nafsiyat Mental Health	Culturally-sensitive counselling
Nisaba	Yoga and women's health
Protein Dance	Dance, movement and embodiment
Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration	Art and drawing
Routes Mentoring Programme	Employment, education, or language mentoring for refugee women
Samaritans	1-1 mental health drop-in support
Screen Share UK	1-1 digital support drop-in
Soho Swim	Swimming lessons for adult women
Speak Street	Art classes and Art Talks field trips
Squire Patton Boggs	Legal Empowerment Programme
The Coffee Bean	Barista training for refugees
Trampoline Cafe	Cafes supporting refugee chefs
Walk Your Talk	Business support for refugees
Whittington Health (NHS)	Oral health education
World Harmony Orchestra	Choir and music

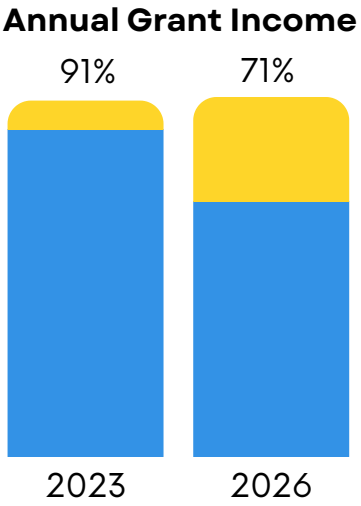
Fundraising Highlights

As the fundraising landscape becomes increasingly uncertain, we are proud to be building a more diverse and sustainable income base. A huge thank you to our supporters who make our work possible!

Income Diversification

In just three years, we have transformed the balance of our income, shifting from 91% from trusts and foundations and 9% from other income in 2023, to 71% from trusts and foundations and 29% from other income in 2026.

We have achieved this diversification by growing individual giving, community fundraising, corporate partnerships, events and legacy giving, alongside our vital relationships with trusts and foundations.



While the wider environment remains challenging we have had to make difficult decisions, including reducing staff numbers and limiting the grants we offer people experiencing destitution. We continue to explore new ways of working and new sources of income to ensure we can remain resilient and can continue supporting our community into the future.



Supper in Solidarity Success

This year we launched Supper in Solidarity, a series of fundraising dinners bringing people together over food, music, stories and shared experiences. Each dinner was co-designed with members of Islington Centre's community, and a local chef preparing a family-style meal. The evenings were joyful celebrations of food, connection and solidarity. Together they raised more than £25,000 to support our work.

From Supper in Solidarity and the Angel Comedy Street Party to The Big Give, our supporters have helped make this progress possible. Thank you to everyone who has donated, fundraised, attended an event, partnered with us or championed our work to ensure Islington Centre is around for years to come.

Contact Us

Islington Centre for Refugees and Migrants
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